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Commentary: The Trump 'CT Scanner' Exposes the Malignancies of the Elites for All to See

November 17, 2020 Admin



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by Victor Davis Hanson

These past four years, Donald Trump, intentionally or not, became a CT scanner that produced three-dimensional images of the innards of elite institutions and people, showing us what is beneath their veneers. He had an eerie manner of replying to critics in such an upstart fashion that those who objected to his supposed crudity proved cruder in repartee than he. And he showcased his successes for America in such a way as to make his enemies wish that successes for their country were failures instead.

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If one suspected before 2017 that White House CNN correspondent Jim Acosta was a lightweight blowhard, be now confirmed you had been naïve in such a balanced assessment.

If you had thought Hillary Clinton was becoming unstable during the Obama years, in the Trump era she ended up hiring two-bit ex-spies to cobble together lies about her opponent, jabber about La Résistance, and urge candidates never to concede an election.

If you once concluded that over-meddlesome Twitter, Google, and Facebook were massaging accounts, searches, and postings in a partisan fashion, after Trump you saw they were creepy Big Brothers with no apologies for warping the Internet.

If in the old days, a busybody Michael Bloomberg seemed a whiny scold with unlimited money he intended to use to get his way, after Trump he became an obsessed politico who threw \$100 million here, another \$100 million there to stop Trump. In the end, Bloomberg proved only that he knew a lot about making money but not so much about how to spend it.

So what was strange in the age of Trump was not just the Left's unhinged hatred of the president (we had seen that before, during the George W. Bush Administration, when the president was tarred as a Brownshirt, a Nazi, and a fascist), but a new sanctimonious and unapologetic furor among establishmentarians of all stripes.

Trump, in their view, violated all rules of polite behavior, of presidential comportment, of beltway protocols. So they felt no compunction in revealing their own low methods of opposing him on their own theory that only scoundrels might ferret out other alleged scoundrels.

They were fond of trite superlatives—"the worst in history," "never before," and "unprecedented," to name a few—to claim there had never been anyone so bad as Trump before in the Oval Office. Thus, he should be sued for enriching himself (he reportedly has lost \$1 billion in net worth since 2017), declared crazy for not consulting the right experts (he aced the Montreal Cognitive Assessment Test), investigated by a special prosecutor for being libeled by Hillary Clinton's libelous purchased dossier, and impeached for bringing up the Biden name to Ukrainian aid-seeking connivers (Google the 65 million matches for an otherwise nonentity "Hunter Biden").

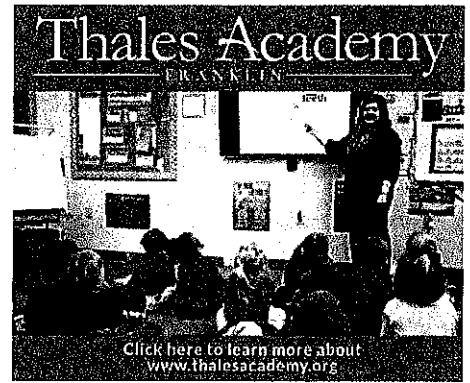
Grandiose Kristallnacht Fantasies

The spleen, the hypocrisy, and the often unethical nature of these anti-Trump writs revealed Washington fixtures to the public as something very opposite to what they had claimed to be.

Take the obvious example of the media.

Christiane Amanpour last week claimed on CNN that the Trump years were like Kristallnacht, as she compared the Trump Administration to the genocidal Nazi assault on civilization. In her self-revelation of ignorance and unhinged hatred, Amanpour—who warned us shortly after the election that she (like Jim Rutenberg of the *New York Times* and Univision's Jorge Ramos) could no longer be a disinterested journalist—apparently believes Trump is an outright Nazi.

No matter that Trump earned unusual Republican support from minority voters, is likely the most popular American president in Israel since the founding of the Jewish State, achieved the lowest black and Latino peacetime unemployment on record, and did not engage in a preemptory war during his tenure. No, to the discredited Amanpour he is no different from the regime that liquidated 6 million Jews and plunged the world into a miasma that cost 70 million dead.



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Trending



One of Biden's First Orders Challenged



Ohio Secretary of State LaRose Deactivates 97,795 Voter

New York Times columnist Tom Friedman, at a time of civil discord over the presidential election, recently poured gasoline onto the national fire by urging his audience to subvert Georgia election law by moving there and establishing temporary residence to vote in the January 5 senatorial runoff: "I hope everybody moves to Georgia, you know, in the next month or two, registers to vote, and votes for these two Democratic senators."

Apparently former Democratic presidential candidate Andrew Yang is boasting that he has already marched to Georgia. Neither seemed to worry that moving to a state for the sole purpose of establishing transitory residence to vote, and thus to help undermine an election, is a felony in most states.

Both men would have made proud the advocates of earlier mass voter movements to Kansas in order to warp the March 1855 vote on statehood, in the aftermath of the Kansas-Nebraska Act. And we all know how that call to move and vote eventually worked out.

Jon Meacham is sometimes considered, after the downfall of admitted serial plagiarist Doris Kearns Goodwin, to be one of progressivism's more popular historians. In his paid analyst position at MSNBC, Meacham praised Joe Biden's post-election oration without telling his employers or his audience that he had a hand in writing it. Meacham is a serial critic of Trump's purported lack of ethics. I suppose we are to believe that his regular moral compass was warped by Trump as he became a paid self-encomiast. Indeed he could not even compliment himself for free.

Revenge Porn

Reign of terror lists or post-election inquisition boards are popular all of a sudden on the civil libertarian Left. Gone are the days when liberals used to boast of loud denunciations of McCarthyite blacklisting.

Good free-speech advocates like Washington Post's Jennifer Rubin ("We have a list"), Clintonite Berkeley professor Robert Reich (A "truth and reconciliation" commission "would name every official, politician, executive and media mogul whose greed and cowardice enabled this catastrophe"), and left-wing Representative Alexandra Ocasio-Cortez (D-N.Y.) ("Is anyone archiving these Trump sycophants?") apparently feel no need any longer to hide what they have become—or always were.

In good *Comité de salut public* fashion, the Robespierrean "Trump Accountability Project" briefly emerged to brag about rooting out Trump officials to make sure they were blacklisted in their post-administration lives. They have now called off the troops, because the uniter Joe Biden (Trump is "sort of like Goebbels") simply asked them to: "In the spirit of the President-elect's call to build a more united country, this project will no longer be active." United, remember, means to these humanitarians to unite all in their hatred of our own Emmanuel Goldstein.

These lists of liberal would-be list makers could be expanded, but again they have reminded us that it is not we conservative maniacs, but they, the caring left-wing folk, who wish to destroy the lives of people with whom they disagree.

Arch-Trump critic, CNN moralist, and now "ruined" Jeffrey Toobin, author of the *True Crimes and Misdemeanors: The Investigation of Donald Trump*, was until recently best remembered for suggesting that the life of Supreme Court nominee Brett Kavanaugh should be destroyed ("If you sexually assault someone in high school, your life should be ruined"). Although now Toobin himself has been fired from *The New Yorker* for exposing himself and masturbating while on camera during a Zoom video conference on "election simulation."

Perhaps Toobin became too excited, in his rhapsodic distaste for Trump, to refrain from what used to be called in most states the "true" crime of "indecent exposure" that

by Ohio Senator

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requires, *inter alia*, inclusion on a sex-offender registry for up to 10 years.

Coup Porn

Once upon a time, retired U.S. military personnel were among the most revered of distinguished public servants in the nation. Now?

Perhaps not so much. It was one thing to violate either the spirit or letter of the Uniform Code of Military Justice by disparaging their commander in chief. But it is quite another for dozens of our bemedaled heroes to claim their sitting president is a veritable Mussolini, fond of Nazi-like tactics of division, and an adopter of Birkenau-like detention methods—and thus in a nation of laws and scheduled presidential elections the president should leave “the sooner the better.”

The irony is that all these distinguished and outspoken retired officers were abjectly silent when the prior administration systematically weaponized the DOJ, CIA, and FBI to sabotage an oppositional campaign, a presidential transition, and presidency, and, in particular, unlawfully and unethically framed a fellow officer Lt. Gen. Michael Flynn. True Mussolini-like or fascist tactics are better found in forging evidence submitted to a FISA court, unlawfully leaking the unmasked names of surveilled American citizens, and hiring foreign nationals to create a false dossier to undermine a presidential campaign.

Coup porn became a new phrase to describe these calls of ex-military and military analysts for forced removal of Trump from office. What was the catalyst for these astounding statements?

The revolving-door culture of Pentagon-to-defense-contractor boards? The insidious careerist groupthink of Washington political correctness? The failure of Trump to consult sober and judicious experts at the Brookings Institution or the Council on Foreign Relations or among the retired Joint Chiefs?

Whatever the cause, the Trump CT scanner revealed inner pathologies in Washington military culture in the fashion that it had exposed the top echelons of the FBI, CIA, and Justice Department. The past imbrolios and prevarications of John Brennan, James Clapper and James Comey were illuminated during the Trump years—by the collective nonstop anti-Trump hysterias of Brennan, Clapper, and Comey.

A number of officials and celebrities and leftists, from Robert DeNiro and LeBron James to Michelle Obama, could be characterized as BT or AT—Before Trump or After Trump. DeNiro took a somewhat controversial personal life and ensured that it would overshadow his life’s work of filmmaking not by the legitimate act of criticizing Trump, but by serially wishing that he could do bodily harm to the president of the United States.

James was a gifted athlete and a successful merchandiser of his name—Before Trump. After Trump, he became emblematic of a sycophantic opportunist, who praised his racist Chinese Communist paymasters while attacking the very culture that had enriched him.

Once out of office, First Lady Michelle Obama had sought to dispel suspicions that she was race-obsessed, given her prior constant complaints about her purported unfair treatment. Yet Mrs. Obama, despite being a multimillionaire who could teach even Hillary how to leverage real money upon exiting the White House, has spent a great deal of her newfound free time not just criticizing her successors, but, *mirabile dictu*, of labeling half the nation veritable racists who “voted for the status quo, even when it meant supporting lies, hate, chaos, and division.”

In our new ecumenical creed, inciting division to promote “unity” means calling nearly 73 million American voters liars, haters, and dividers.

Inchoate Objections and Demands

None of these unhinged critics offered a detailed critique of what drove them nearly insane in their hatred. Do they object to the Trump virus travel ban, the eight-month roll-out of a new vaccination for COVID-19, or even explain exactly how Joe Biden would differ in his coronavirus strategy other than requiring all Americans to wear masks?

Will raising income, payroll, and inheritance taxes spur economic growth?

What exactly will a new Iran deal or Paris Climate Accord accomplish? Ease Middle-East tensions and ensure the United States meets global carbon footprint standards that it already exceeds?

How will ending fracking, opening up the border, or détente with China make the United States richer, more unified, and safer?

So there are few specific allegations that Trump's policies failed other than the boilerplate of him supposedly being racist or cruel. No one accuses President Trump of sexual indiscretions inside the White House in the manner of FDR, JFK, or Bill Clinton. No one suggests that son Don or Eric Trump accompanied the president to China to cut billionaire-deals to enrich the Trump family.

Even Trump's impeachers did not allege that Trump had unleashed a politicized FBI, CIA, and Justice Department against the Biden campaign or paid for a dossier to fabricate lies about the Democratic nominee and leak it before the election. In the Trump years, the IRS may well have leaked the president's tax returns; in the Obama years, it illegally went after conservative groups to aid the Obama reelection campaign.

In their obsession with Trump, in their lust to return to power or regain influence or reestablish national attention, to remind us of their connections and arguments from authority, to prove that the successful upstart Trump's record was a failure, and that own their dubious expertise and unappreciated commentary were seminal and invaluable, elites revealed to the nation what they were—and perhaps had always been.

And the resulting penetrating imagery showed their own growing malignancy inside and out.

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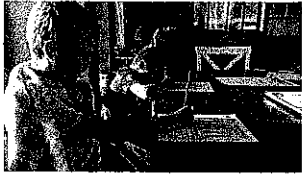
*Victor Davis Hanson is an American military historian, columnist, former classics professor, and scholar of ancient warfare. He was a professor of classics at California State University, Fresno, and is currently the Martin and Illie Anderson Senior Fellow at Stanford University's Hoover Institution. He has been a visiting professor at Hillsdale College since 2004. Hanson was awarded the National Humanities Medal in 2007 by President George W. Bush. Hanson is also a farmer (growing raisin grapes on a family farm in Selma, California) and a critic of social trends related to farming and agrarianism. He is the author most recently of *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict was Fought and Won* (Basic Books).*

Friedman, Trump Accountability Project

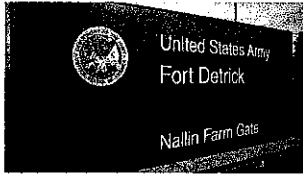
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